



## OPERATION: TOHIDU™

Helping Warfighters Manage  
Post-Deployment Stress



# Operation: Tohidu™

An experiential rehabilitation program designed for a growing population of warfighters living with post-traumatic stress, mild-to-moderate traumatic brain injury and other deployment-related traumas. A holistic retreat where veterans are able to share a common experience and heal in a safe environment.



In a peaceful and secluded atmosphere, participants connect with nature and their fellow comrades to become empowered with alternative therapies to better manage anxiety and post-traumatic stress. At our 108-acre Retreat and Recreation Center in Southern, Maryland, guests participate in a combination of educational and experiential activities utilizing a strict program model, similar to their military regimen. Guests are welcomed from around the county.

Any veteran or active duty service member who has been diagnosed or is self-reporting with post-traumatic stress or other deployment related trauma is eligible to attend.

The weeklong retreat is free of charge to veterans and active duty service members, including accommodations and travel.

## To·hi·du

A Cherokee Word Meaning:  
*Peace of Mind, Body and Spirit*

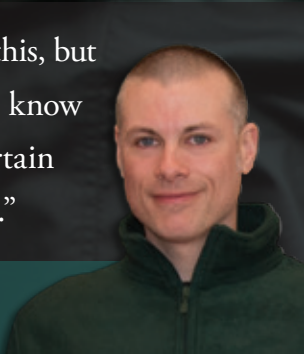


“I said things out loud [in group] that I have never said, I’ve always just kept it in.”



**HM1(FMF) Jason Marino**  
United States Marine Corps (ret.)

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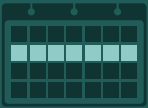
**SPC Scott Barber**  
United States Army (ret.)



# Retreats at a Glance

We have carefully designed a program that delivers results.

Therapeutic Modalities	
PTSD Education	Equine Therapy
Peer Mentoring	Exercises
Group Collaboration	Spirituality
Experiential Learning	Skill Training



7 Days

Intensive Therapy  
Guided by Credentialed  
and Certified Support  
Professionals



Board Certified

Retreats are Guided by a  
Board-Certified Psychologist  
with Military and  
Programming Experience



98 Hours

Of Retreat Programming



4-to-1

Guest to Peer Mentor Ratio



20 Guests

Participate Per Retreat  
Including veterans and  
active duty military



1,248 Years

Combined Service Years  
Includes guests, mentors,  
chaplains, psych techs  
and speakers  
(First Four Retreats)

## SHORT-TERM OUTCOMES

Keep the veteran or service member in the workforce. In the case of active duty personnel, maintain or return them to a fit for duty status

Decrease in subjective experience of anxiety and/or depression

Improved sense of personal mastery of lives and triggering situations

Change in expectations

Establishment of support system via relationship with other participants

Ability to make informed decisions with respect to psychopharmacological and other interventions

Prevention of further psychological decline

Completion of smoking cessation and other substance abuse treatment program

Modeling of health and wellness lifestyle

## LONG-TERM OUTCOMES

Graduates report improved self-regulation and report significant reductions in use of pharmacology, self-medication and improvement of their overall physical and mental condition.

Unemployed veterans will be able to return to the workforce; increase the likelihood that they will remain employed. Active duty personnel will remain fit for duty or return to full duty if they have been in a limited duty status

Symptom relief, mitigation, and management

Continued execution of treatment plan developed during the retreat

Continued education about the condition and coping strategies

Increase in interpersonal relationships as a source of ongoing support

Ability to maintain a wellness lifestyle

Ability to integrate and fully function in civilian life

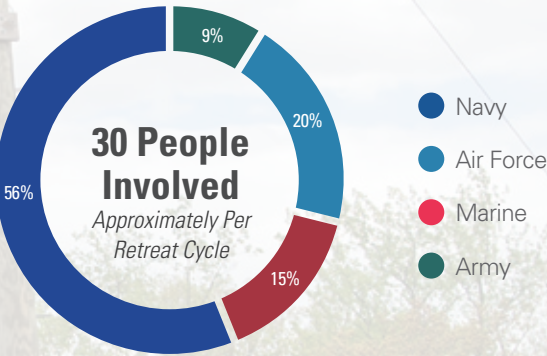


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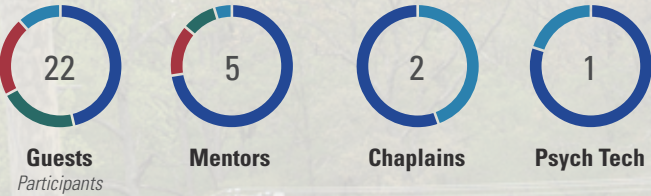
SSGT Max Rasmussen  
United States Air Force

## PROGRAM MAKEUP BY MILITARY BRANCH

Figures based on average of four cycles of Operation: Tohidu™



Representative Retreat Composition



## DEPLOYMENTS REPRESENTED

- ▶ Afghanistan
- ▶ Dessert Shield
- ▶ Dessert Storm
- ▶ Germany-Zweibrucken
- ▶ HOA Pacific
- ▶ Joint Task Force Guantanamo
- ▶ Korea
- ▶ Marine Expeditionary Unit 24
- ▶ Operation Enduring Freedom
- ▶ Operation Iraqi Freedom
- ▶ Panama
- ▶ SFOR Bosnia
- ▶ Somalia
- ▶ Vietnam



Philosophy & Structure

Our therapeutic modules are designed around a philosophy derived from our Eight Pillars of Treatment. Our goal is to produce a physiological and psychological response without hospitalization or medication.

The Operation: Tohidu approach enables participants to uncover the layers of trauma through education, peer support, group therapy, experiential learning, spiritual experiences and other alternative therapies and interventions. Retreats are designed for both men and women and serve up to 20 participants each session. We create an intimate atmosphere where participants connect and share their struggles so they can learn to cope with their unresolved trauma.

Sleep Schedule

A strict start time (reveille) and lights out time is observed throughout the retreat. Since one of the casualties of PTS(d) is disturbed or disrupted sleep, a waking watch/evening duty station is set up to ensure that someone is available to talk with participants who have needs after lights out. Medical assistance is available should it be needed.

Uniforms & Gear

Each participant is issued “uniform” apparel with the program logo and the participant’s last rank and surname. These are worn with appropriate pants for all activities that do not require special gear, such as shorts or exercise attire.

A Regular Routine

- Morning physical training geared toward differing abilities.
- Education sessions in which experts are called in to discuss key issues and provide tools for coping with the condition.
- Opportunities for private sessions with specialists as needed.
- Equine therapy for all ability levels.

EIGHT PILLARS OF TREATMENT

Facing the Event

- Therapy
- Talking
- Grief
- Confession

Avoid Avoidance

- Re-Engage
- Desensitize in Safe Environment
- Group
- Manage Panic

Reduce Hyperarousal

- Exercise
- Relaxation Technique
- Decrease CNS Stimulant Use
- Aggression Management

Spiritual & Existential

- Confession
- Worship
- Memorials
- Rituals
- Pastoral Counseling

Care of Body

- Sleep
- Diet
- Wellness Behaviors
- Substance Abuse

Social Support

- Therapy or Support Groups
- Family
- Social Activities

Psycho-Education

- Military & PTSD
- Behavioral Interventions
- Treatments
- Symptoms

Lower Expectation

- Prognosis
- Time to Improve
- “Shoulds”

	DAY 1 SUNDAY	DAY 2 MONDAY	DAY 3 TUESDAY	DAY 4 WEDNESDAY	DAY 5 THURSDAY	DAY 6 FRIDAY	DAY 7 SATURDAY	
0600		Up						
0630		Muster in PT gear						
0635		Daily 7: Barn				Daily 7: Yoga		Daily 7: Barn
0745		Personal Hygiene						
0830		Breakfast						
0900		Morning Modules <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• PTS Educ.</li><li>• Reintegration</li><li>• Leadership</li></ul>	Morning Modules <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• PTS Educ.</li><li>• Neuro-feedback</li></ul>	Morning Modules <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• PTS Educ.</li><li>• Military Sexual Assault</li></ul>	Morning Modules <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Exercise</li><li>• Pain</li><li>• Reintegration</li><li>• Sleep Hygiene and Alpha Stem</li></ul>	Morning Modules <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Leadership</li><li>• Mental Illness Smoke and Mirrors</li><li>• Nutrition</li><li>• Hyperbarics</li></ul>	★ Graduation	
1230	Lunch							
1330	Mentor Training	Experiential Low Ropes	Experiential High Ropes	Experiential Nessie, High Ropes	Experiential Equestrian, Trail	DC War Memorial – Tour with program		
1600	Arrivals	Group Existential	Group Anger Management	Group Panic Management	Group Grief and loss			
1700	Paperwork	Personal time: 1:1 with psych tech, chaplain, mentors, AA rep, opportunities to network						
1800	Dinner							
1900	Orientation and Opening speaker Motivation and Inspiration	Guest Speaker PTS(d), Overcoming Adversity or common theme	Guest Speaker PTS(d), Overcoming Adversity or common theme	Poolside Barbecue <i>Weather Not Permitting</i> Normal Dinner and UNO Championship	Self Medication Discussion Alcohol and Meds, Personal Stories	Group: Integration and closure		
2100	First “group” introduction meeting (For mentors, participants, and chaplain)	Hotwash for mentors						
2200	Lights out							

SAMPLE SCHEDULE





“It empowered us to not be ashamed of sharing whatever aspect of it that affected us in such a traumatic way. It really did validate that we’re not crazy, we’re not abnormal.”

**RPC Shalon Santana**  
United States Navy



## Our Approach

Because there is no one specific way to treat deployment-related trauma, we incorporate a number of experiential components that allow participants to confront fear and anxiety. We customize our program to meet the individual needs of each veteran. The retreat models wellness and healthy behaviors.



All activities are mandatory although participants will have “free” time in the evenings to pursue additional recreational activities, meet with counselors, or simply network with fellow participants.

### PTS(d) Educational Sessions

Education sessions seek to empower participants so they are no longer at the mercy of a “system” or providers who know very little about combat-related PTS(d) – even though they are often being asked to treat it. Participants will learn and better understand the clinical criteria, how it gets diagnosed, what the long term prognosis is, how to make it better, what makes it worse, what therapies work, what kind of support is available. Education includes criteria for PTS(d), anxiety and mood disorders, common post-deployment reactions, and acute stress reactions, among others. Participants learn about traditional and non-traditional interventions, as well as the contraindications of use of psychopharmacologicals. Through formal education sessions and experiential activities, participants quickly become an “expert” on his or her condition.

### Skills Training

This component is a subset of the Education component. All education sessions include practical training on implementation of tools for managing panic attacks, anger management, stress management, or coping with specific sequela unique to the combat veteran. Adaptive skills and lifestyle changes that reduce anxiety and depression are taught: leadership, assertiveness, goal setting, nutrition, exercise, for example. Speakers and participants discuss issues of maladaptive coping: alcohol, drugs, prescription drugs, central nervous system stimulants, food, as well as anti-social behaviors.

### Processing

This broadly covers exposure therapies and exploration or processing of personal responses. Exposure therapies, both individual and group, allow the survivor to re-experience traumatic events and process reactions, feelings, and beliefs in a safe, controlled environment.

### Exercise

Pain management, yoga, mind-body wellness, and nutrition programming are a natural component of the program. Since pain and anxiety are experienced and interpreted in the same organ (brain or CNS), they naturally feed back to one another. Increased pain causes anxiety; increased anxiety causes increased pain. The ultimate goal is to empower participants with alternative therapies to better manage anxiety and PTS(d).

### Neurofeedback

This technique is just one example of a therapy that has a proven track record (35 years) in the treatment of anxiety, inattention, poor concentration, sleep issues, etc., that has virtually no down side (unlike drugs).

### Substance Abuse

Many participants may fall into one or more of the following categories: 1) alcoholic before deployment and now its worse; 2) started drinking after deployment and now they are dependent/alcoholic; 3) dependent on drugs prescribed by their doctor(s); 4) abusing prescription drugs (their own or someone else’s). A trained addiction counselor and a veteran representing 12-step (AA or NA) is available throughout the retreat. This support allows participants to discuss potential issues with alcohol abuse and better recognize and understand when they may need help. A variety of program options supporting sobriety are offered.

### Equine Assisted Activities and Therapies

All participants join in equine assisted activities and therapies, mainly focusing on therapeutic riding which supports several treatment pillars. Therapeutic riding offers cognitive, physical, and socio-emotional benefits to riders through interactions with the horse, achievement of goals and focused skill progression, and an increase in strength, balance, and flexibility. Melwood’s Equestrian Program provides instruction by certified staff, as well as horse and facility usage, including specifically trained horses.

### Experiential Learning

All participants are encouraged to engage in experiential learning opportunities, including but not limited to high and low rope challenge courses. Working with a trained and experienced staff member as a facilitator, participants have the opportunity to evaluate group and individual strengths and areas of need, identify barriers that arise within individuals and the group, and set objectives for growth.

### Closing Ceremony

A special closing ceremony marks the end of each retreat. This graduation exercise and “Thank You” award ceremony includes civilians and others who honor participants for their service and give good wishes for their continued healing.



# Experiential Learning

Our unique retreat offerings allow for an experience unlike the traditional PTS(d) therapeutic model. Our experiential program will help you change the way you approach and react to stress.



## Climbing Wall

On the climbing wall, individual climbers are supported by a trained staff on a belay system. While one participant is climbing, other participants are encouraged to stay engaged by spotting, coaching, and motivating the climber.

The climbing wall encourages climbers to challenge themselves physically while exploring multiple problem solving options and reflect on how they handle stress and anxiety. Group discussions and debriefs on having perspective, supporting others, and finding creative solutions are part of the experience.



## Low Ropes

Low Ropes experiential learning activities engage participants to interact physically, verbally, and emotionally. Physical movement is a large component of low ropes activities, both on and off the low ropes course. Low ropes activities are designed to promote group interactions and familiarity, prepare participants for high ropes elements by modeling appropriate spotting and how to navigate elements, and focus on encouraging participants to provide verbal cues that will navigate their team to complete the course.

## Equine Centered Teambuilding

Using the horse, participants are encouraged to work in small groups to navigate through and attempt to resolve unique problem-solving challenges that require no previous horsemanship knowledge.



## NESSIE

Nessie is a high ropes challenge course individual belayed element. A participant, while being supported by a belay line managed by a trained facilitator, climbs up the element and transfers across three floating beams. Ground participants support the climber by balancing the beams. The combination of the individual challenge with the team building aspect allows for a powerful experiential learning experience that also engages the group.



## High Ropes

The high ropes course allows participants to navigate individual elements connected by transfer points, leading to a zip line. The elements on the high ropes course mimic the low ropes elements, so that the facilitator can encourage participants to reflect on their low ropes experiences and connections while navigating the higher course. Participants wear a safety harness and helmet at all times and are connected to the course with a lobster claw system.





# Sign Up

Melwood’s Operation: Tohidu is helping wounded warriors overcome obstacles to their recovery and supporting their successful reintegration.

By many accounts, it is one of the most intensive programs for veterans and active duty personnel with PTS(d) currently available in the eastern United States.

Interested in participating? Contact us via the web, email, or telephone and we will assist you in getting signed up!

**SIGN-UP ONLINE**  
OperationTohidu.org

**CONTACT US**  
E Tohidu@melwood.org  
T 301.856.6358

## Or, Get Involved

In order to Operationalize Operation: Tohidu as a full-time program with monthly—or more—retreats annually, we estimate the total cost to be approximately \$900,000. That would enable us to serve 250–350 wounded warriors and Peer Mentors each year.



“The thing I truly I enjoyed about my time [at Operation: Tohidu] is learning more about myself, my temperament, more about the resources available to me and learning that people really do care”

**AT2 Paul Walton**  
United States Navy



### HOW CAN I HELP?

#### Donate

Partner with Melwood to make Operation: Tohidu sustainable.

<div>★ <b>\$75,000</b> Homecoming Sponsor Supports 20 Veterans</div>	
<div>★ <b>\$37,500</b> Patriot Defender Sponsor Supports 10 Veterans</div>	<div>★ <b>\$18,750</b> Liberty Sponsor Supports 5 Veterans</div>
<div>★ <b>\$7,500</b> Providence Sponsor Supports 2 Veterans</div>	<div>★ <b>\$3,750</b> Clean Slate Sponsor Supports 1 Veterans</div>
<div>♥ Your Gift of Any Size</div>	

#### Get the word out!

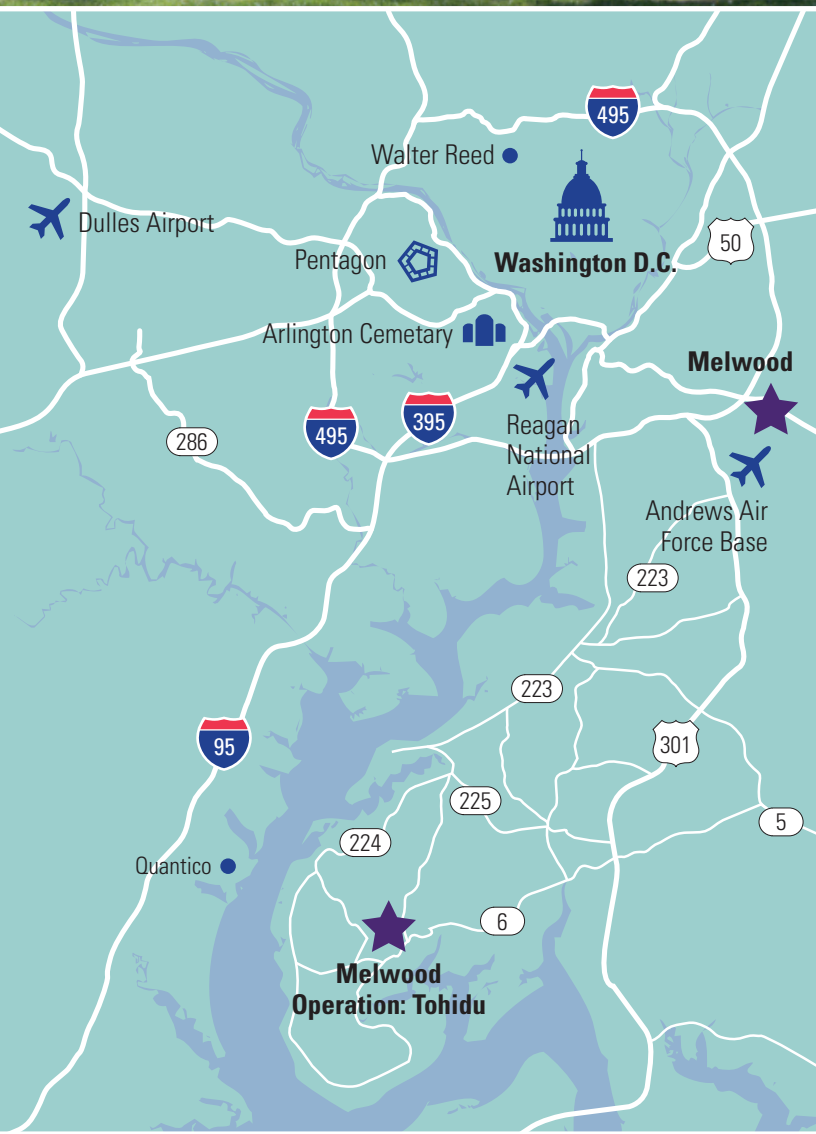
Share information about Tohidu with friends and family.

#### Time

Volunteer your hours and get involved with Tohidu.

The return on your investment will reap huge benefits to the veterans with PTSD and to the community: ease of transition from war to home, increased productivity in the workplace, enhanced family relationships, improved parenting, reduced medical, pharmacological and mental health costs to the state and federal government, and reduced incarceration. Our ability to sustain the program and continue to meet the needs of our Country’s wounded warriors is uncertain, so we need your help. More about the retreats budget on following page.





# Location

Operation Tohidu retreats are based in close proximity to a number of the major airports and military bases. Please contact our office for more information on our location.

# Expense Budget

Melwood offers Operation: Tohidu’s 7-Day retreats free of charge for eligible veterans and active duty military.



All figures are based on Fiscal Year 2014.

## MELWOOD FY 2014 FINANCIAL POSITION

\$81 Million Revenue	12% of Expenses
	Management (9%)
\$79 Million Expenses	Fundraising (3%)

# About Melwood

## Background

Melwood started in 1963 when a small group of parents and supporters decided to teach plant care to young adults who were considered by most to be untrainable, and unemployable. Their goal was almost unheard of: jobs for people with ‘disabilities.’ On seven acres of unimproved land - donated by Andrew’s Air Force Base - Melwood’s founders pitched an Army surplus tent and began to lay the infrastructure for a place where people with differing abilities could learn good work habits, gain specific job skills and earn self-generated income. Over the following decades, Melwood would pioneer many new milestones in the field that would be known as social-entrepreneurial ventures: businesses with the ‘double bottom line’ of providing revenue as well as jobs and independence for people with differing abilities.

Melwood is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit charitable organization. We are of the ten largest nonprofit agencies of the nearly 600 U.S. AbilityOne Program affiliated agencies nationwide. We provide jobs and job supports, career training, life skills improvements, community supports and recreational services for over 1,900 people with differing abilities each year, including many veterans and wounded warfighters. Melwood employs more than 1,460 people, including nearly 800 workers with differing abilities. We deliver essential facilities services to over 40 military bases (including 26 military Commands) and federal agencies in the DC metropolitan region.

## Wounded Warrior Transition Program

In partnership with the US Department of Veterans Affairs and the Fort Meade Transition Unit, Melwood supports an internship program that provides on-the-job training to selected ex-military personnel with service-related, trauma-induced, injuries. The program provides six months of training, coaching, vocational rehabilitation and support to assist wounded warriors in developing new job skills that will afford them opportunities to transition successfully and empower them to change their own lives. After completing their internship, trainees are afforded job opportunities according to their new skills.

## Notable Federal Clients

- Fort George G. Meade
- United States Naval Academy
- Aberdeen Proving Ground
- Naval Air Station Patuxent River
- Joint Base Andrews
- Naval Surface Warfare Center Dahlgren
- Joint Base Anacostia-Bolling
- Washington Navy Yard

## Business & Service Lines

- Total Facilities Management
- Janitorial, Custodial Services
- Landscaping and Grounds Keeping
- E-Solutions: Green Cleaning, Electronics Recycling, Recycling
- Customized Job Training
- Community Support Services
- Retreat and Recreational Services
- Call Center Services

## Contact Information

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Upper Marlboro, MD 20772

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**Email:** [Services@melwood.org](mailto:Services@melwood.org)

**Melwood.org**



# Operation: Tohidu is a transformative program for war fighters living with PTS(d) and other deployment related trauma. Hear first hand from retreat participants how the program is helping our Nation's war heroes.

## Operation: Tohidu Disclaimer

Information provided through Operation: Tohidu is not a substitute for medical or professional care, and you should not use this information in place of a visit, call, consultation, or the advice of your physician or other healthcare provider. Melwood is not liable or responsible for any advice, course of treatment, diagnosis, or any other information, services, or products you obtain from the Operation: Tohidu program. Always seek the advice of your physician or other qualified health provider with any questions you may have regarding a medical condition.

Melwood does not recommend or endorse any specific tests, physicians, products, procedures, opinions, or other information that may be presented in presentations, on Melwood's website, or on any video posted on its various social media sites. Reliance on any information provided by Melwood, Melwood employees, contracted writers, or medical professionals presenting content for Melwood is solely at your own risk.

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More Information, Press Coverage  
and Retreat Videos Available Online:

**OperationTohidu.org**

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